



Indian Health Service

Update

Elder Care Initiative

For more information on the Elder Care Initiative, contact: Louise Kiger, M.N., R.N., Director, Division of Nursing, Office of Health Programs, IHS, 301-443-1840, or Dave Baldrige, Executive Director, National Indian Council on Aging, 505-888-3302.

One special initiative of the Indian Health Service (IHS) is the assessment of elder health care services. The American Indian and Alaska Native elder population doubled during the decade of 1980 to 1990. Almost 60 percent of American Indian and Alaska Native elders live within the service areas of IHS health care facilities. The health needs of elders have shifted from acute and infectious diseases to chronic and degenerative diseases. Services for elders come from a variety of tribal, local, State, and Federal programs.

The Elder Care Initiative Workgroup is collating information regarding existing elder programs, resources, and initiatives of the IHS, Federal agencies, tribes, and States. The workgroup expects to advise the Director on elderly issues and recommend an Elder Care Program for the IHS by the end of January 1996. Under consideration is a recommendation to provide training at six Indian Country sites on screening and assessment and how to coordinate a multi-disciplinary approach to elder care.

GOALS FOR THE ELDER CARE INITIATIVE

The goals established by the Workgroup for each IHS Area Office and Service Unit to achieve for the Elder Initiative are:

1. Work with tribes to promote the health and well-being of older American Indians and Alaska Natives.
2. Develop comprehensive home and community care programs and supportive services to preserve the individual elder's integration into family and community life.
3. Provide an effective, accountable, and cost-effective program of health care for American Indian and Alaska Native elders with ongoing evaluation of quality, appropriateness, and outcome measures.
4. Inventory and evaluate all current and planned IHS, tribal, and urban elder health care programs and services.
5. Develop medical and other allied health professional expertise in Indian aging through geriatric and gerontological education, research, and training of staff and improved practice standards for health care providers of elder American Indians and Alaska Natives.
6. Educate community leaders, American Indian and Alaska Native elders, and community care program providers in health promotion and disease-disability prevention strategies.
7. Facilitate access to American Indian and Alaska native elders for timely and appropriate care, to identify the need for intervention before that need becomes acute.
8. Integrate provider and community efforts, mobilize community resources, and assist tribes in developing elder care services.
9. Provide clinical preventive services and functional assessments annually for each elder. Provide comprehensive geriatric assessment and management for the frail elderly.
10. Encourage the research practice of using American Indian and Alaska Native focus groups to identify problems, concerns, and solutions within their home communities.